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ABSTRACT

A media specialist and third-grade teachers developed a 2-week student-driven, resource-based inquiry unit that offers students a perspective about women's contributions to society, both historical and current. The unit uses the KWL model (what do you Know, what do you Want to know, and what have you Learned), oral interviews, children's literature (mainly picture books) with strong female characters, CD-ROM technology to develop students' research skills, interviewing and transcription skills, presentation skills, and letter-writing skills. Students were formed into small groups from all the third-grade classrooms in the school to gives students experience in working in unfamiliar teams. Part of the success of the unit was that many women were willing to be interviewed or participate in a panel discussion. The composite knowledge and experiences of these women provided a rich source of primary data. Rich resources were important, but most of the success of the unit resulted from teachers allowing students to construct their own learning. (A 37-item list of human resources, a 22-item list of children's literature, and a 7-item list of other resources are attached. An appendix describes the Media Action Council of Indiana.) (RS)

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Picture What Women Do: An Inquiry Learning Example

by Julia Robinson

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Picture What Women Do is a student-driven, resource-based inquiry unit which almost designs itself. It can be redesigned year after year depending on the resources of the school and community and the interests of the students. Its inception began with a third grader teacher coming to me, the media specialist, to ask about resources for a women's history unit during the month of March. I had long wanted to be a part of an oral history project, and this seemed like an ideal opportunity. The teacher had wanted to simply research women's contributions to history, but in brainstorming with the other third grade teachers, we quickly developed a broader focus to include interviews and children's literature. At no time was there any lecture involved, except to model researching, interviewing or presentation skills and to outline expectations.

Let me say from the beginning that this project would not have been possible without an open access media center with flexible scheduling. Also, the advantage of a dedicated phone line and a speaker phone made phone interviewing easy and enjoyable for the students and the interviewee. Other technology we were lacking but have since added will allow the students the option of producing hypermedia and/or video products next year. Next year we will also begin planning before March and extend the unit into a full month-long activity.

PLAN, PLAN PLAN

We began with a brainstorming session to outline goals, list resources, schedule activities and decide what was reasonable to accomplish in the two weeks we had allotted for this unit. We decided our goal was to give the students a perspective about women's contributions to society, both historical and current, through research and actual conversations with women. We also wanted to use good children's literature, mostly in the form of picture books, to stimulate discussion about strong female characters. We wanted the students to develop research skills, use CD-ROM technology, practice interviewing and transcription, learn to work in unfamiliar teams, organize information into a poster, report or presentation, and practice their letter-writing skills. We decided to use the **KWL** model (What do you **K**now, what do you **W**ant to know, what have you **L**earned), so students would be involved from the beginning in constructing their own learning, building on acquired knowledge by asking and answering good questions.

DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES

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It was primarily the media specialist's job to come up with the resources. I agreed to contact the Indiana Humanities Council and the Children's Museum for video resources and to go to the public library to boost our media center and classroom collections of picture books featuring strong female characters. Since we didn't have time to order a kit from the National Women's History Project, I borrowed one from another school. I called the Girl Scouts, Girls Incorporated, the YWCA, the AAUW, and Dreams and Swords, a feminist bookstore, for suggestions of women who might be willing to be interviewed.

At our first planning session we scheduled all our activities so as not to run into conflict with other classes using the media center during the two-week period. We decided to begin with a total immersion into the unit on Monday, Day 1 of our two weeks. We divided the third grade in half and scheduled two

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50-minute visits to the media center early in the morning. These were brainstorming sessions using the overhead projector. The students came up with several acetate sheets' worth of things they already knew about what women do all day long. The students then went back to their classrooms to brainstorm questions they wanted to ask the women they would be interviewing. Teachers brought these questions to me at the end of the day and I consolidated them into two sets, one for phone interviews and one for the panel discussion we had decided to have on Day 10 as our culminating activity. We also planned a group session for the last 50 minutes of Day 1. The students came to the cafeteria/auditorium where we used a large screen projector to view clips of women as they are portrayed on television. Collecting these clips and organizing them on a videotape was another responsibility assigned to the media specialist.

We decided to cross-group students from each of the four third grades, which would allow for 26 groups of three or four students working together on the phone interviews. Allowing 15 minutes for each interview and a 5-minute space between each, we scheduled up to 7 interviews each morning for four consecutive days. The two empty slots on Day 4 were later filled with women who needed to reschedule at the last minute. (It is important to plan for last-minute rescheduling so all students get to participate in a phone interview.) I made phone calls to schedule the interviewees, (and panel discussion participants) and was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to get women to commit 15 minutes of their busy schedules to this project. I then passed out a master schedule to the teachers, who filled in students assigned to each interview. The cross-grouping meant that students would be working in teams outside of their normal home-room grouping. Teachers carefully mixed attitudes and abilities to assure for success in these groups.

Along with the time scheduled for phone interviews, we scheduled two 45-minute class visits to allow for research about famous women in history using print and CD-ROM resources. We also decided to assign a "homework interview" with each student's mother or grandmother or a woman they knew well. Teachers incorporated children's literature discussions in their own classrooms and each was free to determine the type of end products they would require. Teachers also took responsibility for student-written thank-you letters to our interviewees and panel members. (Participants later shared with me how touched they were by these personal letters.) We acknowledged that the different needs and abilities of students would require flexibility from all of us to insure an enjoyable and educational unit for everyone involved. At the end of this first planning session, we realized we had engineered something new for all of us, and reminded each other that it was doable if we didn't overextend ourselves. We weren't aware at that time how much fun we would all have watching the students take over their own learning.

Another unexpected twist was that when the art teacher found out what we were doing she changed her lesson plans to coordinate with us. She had a video about Faith Ringgold, and artist and author who produces story quilts. I provided the Reading Rainbow video, The Patchwork Quilt. So, while the third graders were studying famous women and writing stories about women in the classroom, they were producing story quilts a la Faith Ringgold in art class!

As a culminating activity/celebration on Day 10, the third graders again assembled in the cafeteria/auditorium to meet a panel of eleven women who "told their story" in five minutes or less. I then roamed among the students with a portable microphone and they asked questions of the women, some of which they had prepared ahead of time and some spontaneous. The women were a mix of busy professionals and stay-at-home moms who volunteered and supervised many child-centered activities.

INSURE THE SUCCESS OF ALL WITH A VARIETY OF RESOURCES

The success of this unit depended on many factors. We found a wide variety of women who were thrilled

to be interviewed or to participate on the panel, and the composite knowledge and experiences of these women provided a rich source of primary data. Most of them and most of the "homework interviewees" provided photographs of themselves which could be used to illustrate poster stories about the interviews. For the research about famous women in history, four CD-ROM encyclopedias complimented print resources from our own and the public library and the video resources from the Children's Museum and the Indiana Humanities Council.

Managing the phone interviews and the transcription required a speaker phone with a nearby tape recorder, plenty of blank cassettes to record each interview, some privacy (we used my office for the phone calls), and a bevy of extra tape recorders and writing space scattered around the media center. We are fortunate to have plenty of electrical outlets and two small conference rooms which helped manage this rather noisy activity. And, because students work at different rates of speed in groups just as they do individually, the teachers had to be willing to allow a few students to be gone to the media center at a time, while the rest of the classroom activity went on. The literature discussion was an optional activity in many cases for those who were behind in their projects.

ALLOW STUDENTS TO CONSTRUCT LEARNING

Rich resources were important, but most of our success resulted from teachers allowing students to construct their own learning. For instance, when the classes came back to the media center for a wrap-up session to recall what it was they had learned, one girl exclaimed, "I didn't know Helen Keller didn't like to eat vegetables!" And a boy said, " I didn't know my mother played soccer in high school." Another student was pleased to share that a 60-year-old author he interviewed on the phone had boxed as a girl and didn't sound 60 at all! It was clear to all of the teachers that, without any lecturing and with minimal guidance from us, the students had truly "gotten the picture."

In a wrap-up session, we asked the students what they still would like to know about women. The maturity of their questions was even more promising. A boy who had interviewed a woman who works for the Indiana Sports Corporation wanted to know why women are under-represented in professional sports. Other students wanted to know what life was like for women in other countries or other times; others questioned why most women are responsible for running the house and outside work and why most women make less money than men. All the classes wanted to know why women and girls almost always look or act stupid on television. In our own wrap-up session later, the planning team agreed that, using these student-generated questions, we probably could have followed this unit with a number of other units based on history, geography, economics or social issues. We were beginning to understand constructivist education, resource-based inquiry and "teacher as coach" as more than just educational theories. We had made a successful attempt to restructure education at a very local level and had enjoyed ourselves in the process!

HUMAN RESOURCES

Marsha Beeman. Quality Assurance Manager for Universal Flavors.

Mary Buckler. Marion County Treasurer.

Debbie Campbell. Mother and volunteer.

Pamela Carter. Attorney General of the State of Indiana

Connie Champlin. Director of Media and Technology, M.S.D. of Pike Township. Served in Peace Corps twice.

Dr. LiFen Chang. Radiologist.

Denise Chisley. Marketing Manager, Mays Chemical Company.

Jan Clarke. American Cablevision.

Jan Cornett. Owner, Janco Lock Service.

Gaynell Collier-Mager. Owner of Growing Connection, and all-woman landscape design company.

Nancy Conner, PhD, English. Assistant Director of the Indiana Humanities Council.

Betty Corbitt. Director of Community and Staff Relations, M.S.D. of Pike Township.

Dr. Amy DelMundo. Plastic Surgeon.

Lori Elliott. Teacher and Military Intelligence Officer, Army Reserves,served in Persian Gulf.

Diane Ellis. Program Event Specialist for Girl Scouts, previously worked on a wagon train as part of a treatment program for juvenile offenders.

Debbie Estes. Firefighter.

Rev. Beverly Faulk. Chaplain at Methodist Hospital.

Mary Foust. Plumber on large building projects.

Linda Halfaker. Principal, Central Elementary School, M.S.D. of Pike Township.

Jane Harnishfeger. Director, Sojourner, shelter for battered women and their children.

Danielle Havens. Owner of Danico Enterprises, editor of Spanish language textbooks.

Stephanie Heckman. Owner of Artemis Incorporated which provides computer systems for doctors' offices.

Jane Henderson. Grandmother and experienced volunteer.

Linda Karwish. Occupational Therapist.

Rita Kohn. Author.

Betsy Light. Yoga teacher/dancer. Former news reporte.r

Katelyn Macri. Dreams and Swords Bookstore manager. Has been truck driver, zookeeper, animal control officer.

Elizabeth McClellen. Nurse.

Janet Muston. Vice President, Indiana Sports Corporation.

Maria Pimetel-Gannon. President of PTA Council for Pike Township, also works at Olive Garden Restaurant.

Lisa Prosser. President, General Alarm Company.

Dr. Sue Ellen Reed. Superintendent of Schools for the State of Indiana.

Deb Ruth. Housepainter.

Maryann Schmidt. Insurance Agent for commercial clients.

Diane Smith. Technical Writer for Eli Lilly and Company.

Ann Wickham. Director of Senior Employment for the Central Indiana Council on Aging.

Susie Wolf. Computer instructor, IUPUI. Has traveled extensively.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Alan, Benjamin. *Buck.*

Bottner, Barbara. *Bootsie Barker Bites.*

Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius.*

Heath, Amy. *Sofie's Role.*

Hest, Amy. *Ruby's Storm.*

Henkes, Kevin. *Sheila Rae the Brave.*

Hoffman, Mary. *Amazing Grace.*

Holabird, Katharine. *Angelina on Stage.*

Houston, Gloria. *My Great Aunt Arizona.*

Khalsa, Dayal Kaur. *Cowboy Dreams.*

McCully, Emily. *Mirettte on the High Wire.*

MacLachlan, Patricia. *Sarah Plain and Tall.*

Moore, Inga. *Sorcerer's Apprentice.*

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Munsch, Robert N. *Paper Bag Princess.*

Polacco, Patricia. *The Keeping Quilt.*

Shields, Carol. *I Am Really a Princess.*

Schecter, Ben. *Hester the Jester.*

Schulman, Janet. *Jenny and the Tennis Nut.*

Schwartz, Amy. *Bea and Mr. Jones.*

Small, David. *Imogene's Antlers*

Steig, William. *Brave Irene.*

Tusa, Tricia. *Miranda.*

OTHER RESOURCES

"Notable Women" Photo Displays Sets. $12.00 each from National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492-8518. 707/838-6000.

Videocassettes from Indiana Humanities Council:

Breaking Barriers: A History of the Status of Women and the Role of the United Nations. Lasch Media, 1994. 30 minutes.

Cowgirls: Portraits of Amrican Ranch Women. Nancy Kelly, 1986. 29 minutes.

Amazing Grace. Weston Woods, 1993. 10 minutes.

One Fine Day. Ishtar Films, 1984. 5 minutes.

Videocassette from the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library:

A Woman's Place. Time, Inc., 1987. 25 minutes.

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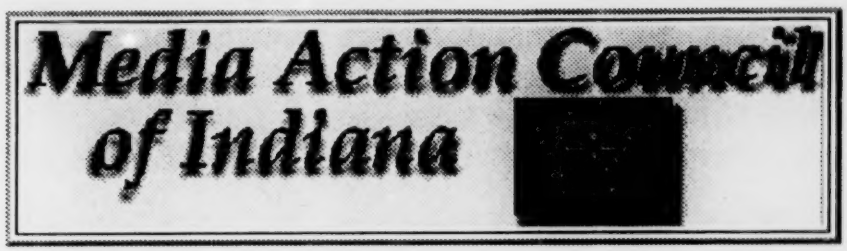

Addressing the role of media in our lives.

The Media Action Council of Indiana web site describes the organization and provides media literacy education curriculum, a bibliography, quotes, and links to other resources.

- About MACI
  - Mission Statement
  - Goals of MACI
  - Key Constituents
  - Executive Committee
- Announcements
- Resource Library
  - Bibliography (Highly annotated--approx. 50K)
  - Curriculum
  - Articles & Editorials
  - Quotes
  - Ads
- Contacts
  - Resource People
  - Media-L Listserv
- Outside Sites

MACI Web Development Team (from L597, Indiana University School of Library & Information Science):

- Jennifer Bauer
- Bruce Mills
- Julia Robinson
- Kathy Walters

We are proud to present the world's ugliest visual index!

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Media Action Council of Indiana engages and supports students, teachers, parents, and the community in on-going dialogue about the impact and contributions of the media to daily life, how and why media work, how to make critical media choices, and the interrelationship between media and social change. In support of this dialogue, the Media Action Council of Indiana showcases grassroots media production in Indiana.

Goals of the Media Action Council of Indiana

Education/Educators

- Provide for continuing educational opportunities for educators.
- Create media education guides that are collaborative and interdisciplinary.
- Make available a clearinghouse for media education materials.
- Establish a local network of educational institutions, corporations, and other organizations with a vested interest in media education.
- Expand the Media Fair into a more dynamic event.
- Persuade the schools of education, communications, journalism and library science to include media education courses and degree programs.

Community Outreach

- Provide life-long learning opportunities.
- Offer a speakers bureau of media professionals.
- Play a role in existing local media events (Heartland Film Festival, new Children's Film Festival, etc.)
- Identify and support quality media products.
- Participate in national media education initiatives.
- Create methods for consumer input and feedback.

Public Relations

- Become a nationally-recognized media power.
- Establish on-going communication to the public.

Public Policy

- Interact with legislative and policy-making entities to affect change and monitor issues related to the MACI mission and objectives.
- Achieve a media education strand in state curriculum mandates and testing competencies.
- Be a watchdog for the influence of lobbyists and special interest groups.
- Participate in local and national debates on public policy and media issues (Telecommunications Act, V-chip, etc.)

MACI Key Constituents

- State Department of Education
- Curriculum Directors
- Media Specialists
- Teachers
- Universities
- Schools
- Youth
- Parents
- Public
- Museums
- Citizen Action Groups
- Civic Leaders
- Politicians/Legislators
- Minority Groups
- Religious Organizations
- Media & Cable Providers
- Media Producers
- Online Users

Executive Committee

Tasks:

- Oversee and coordinate MACI activities.
- Establish 501(c)3 status
- Develop Bylaws
- Manage grant-writing and fundraising process.

Meet the Executive Committee:

Anne Laker is a Program Officer and the Resource Center Director at the Indiana Humanities Council where she creates public education programs on history and literacy and collects print and media resources for the lending library. In 1993 she was trained at the Harvard Institute on Media Literacy and has been an avid media literacy participant ever since. The Indiana Humanities Council hosted two important media literacy meetings before the Media Action Council of Indiana was formed. Anne also reviews documentary films for the Video Librarian journal and is a poet.

Julia Robinson has been a school library media specialist in Indiana and New Mexico for 17 years. While in New Mexico, she was trained with the New Mexico Media Literacy Project. She saw an opportunity to incorporate media literacy education into what was commonly known as information literacy in the school media center world, and began developing interdisciplinary cross-curricular units which she co-teaches with classroom teachers. She returned to Indiana in 1994 to further her studies in the School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University and finished her Specialist degree in August, 1996. The Media Action Council of Indiana has been a dream of hers ever since returning to Indiana.

Karen Sprunger works as an Educational Services Specialist for the Indianapolis Star/News. (url: http://www.starnews.com) She has been a Newspaper in Education coordinator and trainer for ten years, and was trained in media literacy education at the Harvard Institute on Media Literacy. Using her degrees in education, she incorporates media literacy concepts into literacy activities using the newspaper. Before becoming a media literacy educator, she directed a day care center, tutored homebound students, and taught for two years in Bolivia in a mud hut classroom where she and her students spoke Spanish.

Pam Weaver is the executive director of Indianapolis Online (www.indianapolis.in.us). As executive director, she is creating a new online infrastructure for linking business and cultural information about the city of Indianapolis and the surrounding community. She also worked for thirteen years in several marketing and advertising positions and brings her management and technical skills to the Media Action Council of Indiana. Pam is married to Dave Weaver, who teaches Media Literacy at Lawrence Central High School and manages Putnam County Youth Television, a student-operated small production company in Greencastle, Indiana.

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